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N O T E S

BELONGING TO

“OBSERVATIONS ON THE LEPRO ARABUM, BY DR. W. AINSLIE.”

[Referred to at Page 298.]

NOTE A.

Considering the rigid and dry state of the skin which invariably characterizes this Lepra, I have usually recommended, that for a week or more, before giving any medicine internally, the patient should every alternate day be washed from head to foot with soap and warm water; the intermediate days using, for the same purpose, a strong infusion or decoction of the plant called by the Tamools *Toottie elley* (*Sida populifolia*); the body being properly clothed, to facilitate as much as possible the cuticular discharge.*

The remedies I chiefly relied on in treating this formidable disease were the following, and by them I in several instances put a complete stop to it; but it must be remembered that, to give any chance of success, the case must be taken early: for when the malady has laid complete hold of the frame, a radical cure is impossible; a fact, I perceive, well established so far back as the time of Rhazes (de Re Med., lib. vi. page 128).

℞ Pilulæ hydrarg: ʒiv

Camphoræ—— ʒi

Piperis nigri — ʒij

Let these ingredients be well rubbed together, and with the addition of a little syrup of ginger made into forty pills, one of which is to be taken night and morning, and continued for a longer or shorter period, according to circumstances; the patient at the same time drinking daily a pint or a pint and a half of the decoctum Guaiaci, of the Edinburgh Dispensatory, or the same quantity of the decoction of *Daphnes mezerei*. On other occasions I have administered with advantage, pills composed of sulphur of antimony, calomel, and guaiacum, together with one or other of the decoctions above mentioned.

It is well known, that the eastern nations were the first who employed mercury in the cure of obstinate cutaneous and leprous affections; and it may be questioned whether the natives of India were before the Arabians, or only second in order, in availing themselves of the virtues of that powerful mineral. *Rhazes*,† *Mesue*, and *Avicenna*,‡ all notice it; and according to Fallopius,

* It is interesting to remark the notions entertained regarding the same medicine in different countries. The Cochin Chinese attach peculiar virtues to what they call *Kuonghuynh* (*curcuma longa*); amongst other properties ascribed to it, they suppose it to be efficacious in cases of Scabies and Lepra, by its resolvent and diaphoretic powers. “Etiam in Lepra, et Scabie pelendo per transpirationem, valet.”—*Vide* Flor. Cochin. Chin. vol. 1, page 9.

† “*Argentum vivum cum extinguitur ardens est, quod scabiei, et pediculis auxilium affert.*”—*Vide* Rhazes de Re Med. (lib. iii, cap. xxiv.). In the days of Pliny the Elder, the medicinal virtues of mercury do not appear to have been at all ascertained; that writer termed quicksilver the *bane* and *poison* of all things, and what would with more propriety be called *death silver*. (Nat. Hist. lib. xxxiii. cap. vi.)

‡ Avicenna says of mercury: “*Argentum vivum extinctum adversus pediculos et lendes cum rosaseo oleo valet.*”—*Vide* Canon. Med., lib. ii. Tract ii., page 119.

as we find observed by Leclerc, in his "*Histoire de la Médecine*," pages 771-791, it was the opinions of those writers which first suggested its use in venereal affections.*

I have already mentioned about what period Rhazes is supposed to have lived; Mesue, a very distinguished writer, flourished in the tenth century; he professed Christianity, was a native of Bagdat, and practised at Cairo. Avicenna was born in the city of Bochráa, A. D. 980, and died at Hamadan, in Persia, A. D. 1036; he was considered as the greatest philosopher and physician of his age; his writings were printed at Rome in 1595; afterwards translated into Latin, and published at Venice, in 1608. His work is commonly met with in Europe under the title of "*Canons of Avicenna*," but its proper Arabic appellation is *Kanoonie Fi al-ṭib* قانون في الطب. The author, the celebrated *Abu Aly Hussein Ben Abdallah Ben Sina*: I perceive that he recommended, in leprous affections, the use of such medicines as purge off black bile; also bleeding, and a sort of electuary prepared with vipers, the heads and tails of the animals having been previously taken off; and it is a curious fact, that the same remedy was prescribed for similar affections by a celebrated Hindoo physician *Agastier*, as we see by a perusal of his *Pernool*, in which he praises highly the flesh of the hill snake (*Malay Paumboo*), with a free use of asses' milk.

NOTE B.

I have allowed that I had but little experience of the use of corrosive sublimate in leprous affections. It has not for many years past been a favourite medicine in Hindoostan, in any complaint it is very apt to sicken the stomach, give it in what form you will, and certainly irritates the nervous system more than any other preparation of mercury. It needs scarcely be urged here, how necessary it must ever be, in such cases, to support as much as possible the strength of the pulse: with this view, I invariably ordered a moderate use of some generous wine.

NOTE C.

The fingers and toes, on falling off in the *Lepra Arabum*, which they almost invariably do in the advanced stage of the disease, sometimes leave ulcers which are difficult to heal: these in the first instance may be moistened with a liniment composed of equal parts of nitrated quicksilver, spermaceti, and margosa oil (oil of the *melia azadirachta*), and the benumbed parts bathed with plain brandy; after which the sores, when pretty clean, may be dressed with an ointment composed of one ounce of simple ointment, and a dram of cerussa acetata; finally washing them with a mixture of equal parts of decoction of *lignum guaiacum* and that of *margosa bark* (*melia azadirachta*).

NOTE D.

I have said that the diet, in cases of *Lepra Arabum*, should be generous; but it must also be stated, that excess of every kind is most detrimental; all food that is gross, fat, crude, or difficult of digestion, must be studiously avoided; amongst which I include salted and dried meats, pickles, preserves, rich sauces, cheese, &c. &c.; and there is no doubt but that pork and fish, with the exception perhaps of whiting, are most injurious.

The first person who cured Syphilis by means of mercury, appears to have been Berengarius Jacobus, a surgeon of Carpi, who died in 1527.